

1967

DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE

SECRETARY'S REPORT TO CONGRESS ON SMOKING AND HEALTH

Public Law 89-92, "The Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act of 1965," requires that the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare "shall transmit a report to Congress not later than 18 months after the effective date of this Act, and annually thereafter, concerning (a) current information on the health consequences of smoking and (b) such recommendations for legislation as he may deem appropriate."

The 1964 report of the Advisory Committee to the Surgeon General affirmatively answered the question, "Does cigarette smoking cause disease?" Attention and inquiry have since shifted to more precise studies of how much death and disability is associated with cigarette smoking, how much illness and mortality would be averted by cessation of smoking, and on the mechanism by which ingredients in cigarette smoke induce harmful effects on the human body.

Stimulated to a great extent by the 1964 report to the Surgeon General, more than 2000 research studies have been completed and reported in the biomedical literature throughout the world in the intervening three and one-half years. This compares with the total of about 3000 studies reported in all the years prior to 1964. The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, through the Public Health Service, has continued to expand its support for smoking-and-health research. Much of this additional research effort has focused on the gaps in knowledge identified in 1964. The principal thrust of these studies has been to strengthen the conclusions reached in 1964 and to determine more precisely the extent of death and disability attributable to cigarette smoking.

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Principal features of the additional epidemiological information now available are:

1. The extension of the time period of follow-up on smokers and non-smokers;
2. Increased data available for specific age groups among men; and
3. The inclusion of substantial data on women.

A large number of studies have been devoted to questions of behavioral patterns associated with smoking and to the mechanisms of disease-production. These are providing basic information on smoking patterns that may be important in developing means to aid in breaking the cigarette habit, or in eliminating or counteracting the effects of harmful ingredients in cigarette smoke.

The Surgeon General's summary report, which has been incorporated with this report, contains detailed information on the health consequences of smoking.

Recommendations

The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare believes that the present warning label on cigarette packages is inadequate. To say that smoking "may be hazardous" is to ignore the overwhelming evidence that cigarette smoking is clearly hazardous to health.

Furthermore, as amply shown in the recent report of the Federal Trade Commission, the present warning has not been a significant deterrent to cigarette smoking. Also, the warning on the package does not have any impact on the many children and young people who are daily exposed to cigarette advertising.

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Furthermore, the accumulated evidence strongly suggests that the lower the "tar" and nicotine content of cigarette smoke, the lower the harmful effect. Information on the "tar" and nicotine content of the smoke of each brand of cigarette should be put before the smoker and the potential smoker. The consumer would thus be able to make an informed choice of product.

Our recommendations, based on the above considerations, are:

1. The warning statement required by the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act to be placed on each package of cigarettes should be strengthened to state more specifically and positively that cigarette smoking is a hazard to health.
2. This warning should be required in advertisements as well as on cigarette packages.
3. The cigarette package label and advertising should be required to contain information on the "tar" and nicotine levels in the smoke of the cigarette, and the identity and quantity of such other substances or agents in the smoke as may subsequently be found by the appropriate Federal agency to contribute to the health hazards of smoking.

Technical information on the research findings discussed above will be available as an addendum to the Surgeon General's Report. All the technical data, and the recommendations presented by the Federal Trade Commission, will be made available to the Lung Cancer Task Force being established at the National Cancer Institute and the Smoking and Health Task Force to be designated by the Surgeon General.

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